



# United States Department of the Interior

## BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Surprise Field Office  
P. O. Box 460  
Cedarville, CA 96104  
[www.ca.blm.gov/surprise](http://www.ca.blm.gov/surprise)



In Reply Refer To:  
4160 (CA-370) P

February 11, 2009

Dear Interested Party:

The Bureau of Land Management has completed a Rangeland Health Assessment for the Nevada Cowhead Allotment. This assessment concluded that the standard for upland soils was not met. The determination for the RHA was issued on February 10, 2009, and is posted on the Surprise Field Office homepage at [http://www.blm.gov/ca/st/en/fo/surprise/grazing\\_permit\\_renewals.html](http://www.blm.gov/ca/st/en/fo/surprise/grazing_permit_renewals.html).

In accordance with policy, the Bureau of Land Management must modify grazing use to address this non-attainment. In order to complete this process and renew the livestock grazing permit, the Surprise Field Office will be preparing an allotment evaluation and environmental assessment (EA) for the Nevada Cowhead Allotment.

Enclosed is scoping information for the environmental assessment for livestock grazing on the Nevada Cowhead Allotment. Please return any comments that you have regarding alternatives or other actions which would allow this allotment to progress toward attainment of the standards for rangeland health.

In order to ensure consideration of your comments, we ask you to please return any comments that you have regarding this allotment to this office by March 13, 2009. We will use your comments and those received from other interested parties to identify issues and alternatives for consideration in the EA. You will receive a copy of the EA and proposed decision when issued.

Thank you for participating in this grazing permit renewal process. If you have questions, please call Steve Surian or Kathryn Dyer at (530) 279-6101.

Sincerely,

Shane DeForest,  
Surprise Field Manager

Enclosures:  
As Specified

cc: Schadler Ranches, Inc.;

Eugene Gabrych  
Todd Degarmo; Chair, Ft. Bidwell Tribal Council  
Cherie Rhoades; Chair, Cedarville Rancheria  
Jim Gifford; USDA, NRCS  
Center for Biological Diversity, Grazing Reform Program  
Michael Connor; Western Watersheds Project  
Dennis Smith, Modoc Cattlemen's Association  
Nevada Division of Wildlife  
Nancy Huffman; Chair, Northeastern California RAC  
Jesse Harris, Nevada Cattlemen's Association, North Washoe Unit  
Modoc-Washoe Experimental Stewardship Committee  
Norvie Enns; CA & NV Rockhounds  
Nevada Clearinghouse – e-mail



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### **ISSUE SCOPING INFORMATION NEVADA COWHEAD ALLOTMENT**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

The Nevada Cowhead Allotment is in the very northwest corner of Washoe County, Nevada, bordered by Oregon on the north and California on the west. The Nevada Cowhead Allotment is comprised of 41,531 acres, of which 3,071 acres are private land. Elevation ranges from 5,200 feet to 6,600 feet. Precipitation varies from 10 to 14 inches.

The operator is currently authorized to use 2,880 Animal Unit Months (AUMs) on the Nevada Cowhead Allotment, allowing 800 cattle from April 15 to July 15 (2250 AUMs) and 200 cattle from July 16 to October 26 (630 AUMs). This permit was issued under the Appropriations Act, and requires renewal prior to 2010.

The Nevada Cowhead Allotment Management Plan (AMP) adopted in 1982, identifies a three pasture grazing system, described in general terms. The plan permitted 800 cows to be turned out on April 16 in the Plateau Pasture around Barrel Springs. Cattle would use the Plateau Pasture until July 31. The Upper Horse Creek Pasture or the Rim Pasture would be rested each year. The other pasture would be grazed beginning on May 15 until 60% utilization was reached on the key forage species, Thurber's needlegrass and Idaho fescue, or until October 26. The rested pasture would alternate each year.

Since the AMP was first implemented 3 pastures were added to the grazing system. The pastures are: Barrel Springs, North Plateau, South Plateau, Upper Horse Creek, Lower Horse Creek and the Rim Pasture. The Upper Horse Creek Pasture was subdivided into an upland field and a private riparian field in 1999. The pastures are shown on the attached map. The most current pasture rotation system is outlined in the table below:

Table 1. Pasture rotation for the Nevada Cowhead Allotment.

	Lower Horse Creek	Upper Horse Creek	North Plateau	South Plateau	Barrel Springs	Rim Pasture
<b>Year 1</b>	800 C 4/15-4/20 (trailing)	200 C 8/01-9/08	800 C 4/15-7/31	REST	REST	REST
<b>Year 2</b>	800 C 4/15-4/20 (trailing)	REST	REST	800 C 5/15-7/31	800 C 4/15-5/15	200 C 8/01-9/08

In 1985 the Warner Sucker was listed as a threatened species. While the species does not occur in Nevada Cowhead Allotment, the allotment contains riparian habitat consisting of several small streams that flow into occupied Warner sucker habitat in Oregon. Due to this situation, BLM has been consulting with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on all actions on the Nevada Cowhead Allotment since 1985.

The Nevada Cowhead Allotment contains sage grouse habitat and 2 known leks. There is mule deer summer habitat, pronghorn yearlong habitat, and potential bighorn habitat. Elk have been seen in the Nevada Cowhead Allotment. In addition, this allotment has a large portion of land within the North Hays Range Cultural Resource Management Area (CRMA). In addition, juniper is actively encroaching throughout the Nevada Cowhead Allotment.

Table 2. The Rangeland Health Assessment Determination (2008) for the Nevada Cowhead Allotment concluded whether a standard was met or not met and whether current livestock was the causal factor. If an ecological site within the entire allotment doesn't meet a standard, then the standard was marked as not met.

Rangeland Health Standard	Meets Standard	Does Not Meet Standard	Current livestock are the causal factor for not meeting Yes or No	Remarks (locations, etc.)
<b>Upland Soils</b>		✓	Yes	Ocular observations made during the upland health assessments in the Nevada Cowhead Allotment verified pedestalling is active throughout large areas of the allotment, which indicates current period of livestock use may be contributing to conditions. Utilization data has not been recorded higher than moderate, indicating current levels of livestock use may not be contributing to conditions.

<b>Stream Health</b>	✓			The standard achievement determination was based on data collected during the Riparian Functional Assessments, effectiveness monitoring of riparian habitat, and the 2003 fisheries habitat stream survey.
<b>Riparian/ Wetland</b>	✓			A variety of herbaceous and woody species and age classes were noted at most sites. Riparian and wetland vegetation is controlling erosion, stabilizing stream banks, shading water areas to reduce water temperature, filtering sediment, aiding in floodplain development, dissipating energy, delaying floodwater and increasing recharge of ground water that is characteristic for these sites. Vegetation surrounding seeps and springs is controlling erosion and reflects the potential natural vegetation for the site.
<b>Water Quality</b>	✓			The presence of trout, speckled dace, a diverse assemblage of aquatic macroinvertebrates and a vigorous and healthy vegetation component along riparian corridors supports a conclusion that this standard is being met.
<b>Bio-diversity</b>	✓			All indicators for biodiversity were achieved with exception of one. The indicator which was not met supports the conclusion that the upland soil standard is not currently being met. The presence of pedestals provided evidence that the upland soils are not stable; however livestock utilization has not been recorded higher than moderate in the past decade. This has provided sufficient litter and organic matter to provide for replenishment of nutrients. No large-scale invasive infestations are known within this allotment; however components of cheatgrass and Japanese brome are present throughout the allotment. Juniper is actively encroaching within areas of the allotment.

A copy of the land health standards assessment and determinations for the Nevada Cowhead Allotment can be found in the allotment files in the Surprise Field Office. In addition, this information is posted on the Surprise Field Office homepage at [http://www.blm.gov/ca/st/en/fo/surprise/grazing\\_permit\\_renewals.html](http://www.blm.gov/ca/st/en/fo/surprise/grazing_permit_renewals.html). The determination concludes that the standard for upland soils is not being met.

### **NEED FOR PROPOSED ACTION**

The purpose of the action is to decide whether or not to authorize livestock grazing use on the Nevada Cowhead Allotment. The need for the action is to ensure any issuance of a grazing authorization is in conformance with National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Surprise Field Office Resource Management Plan and Record of Decision of April 2008 (RMP), and the Northeastern California and Northwestern Nevada, Standards for Rangeland (Land) Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management 2000.

Washington Office Instruction Memorandum No. 2003-071, calls for all grazing permits to be fully processed by the end of FY 2009, using the information from the land health standards evaluations as needed to complete environmental impact analysis and documentation. In accordance with that policy, the Surprise Field Office proposes to issue a 10 year permit livestock grazing permit to a qualified applicant. All grazing permits are issued in accordance with 43 CFR 4100. Grazing permits must be consistent with the provisions of the Taylor Grazing Act, Public Rangelands Improvement Act, and Federal Land Policy and Management Act.

The grazing permit or authorization (including crossing or trailing permits) will include the type and level of use authorized, including the kind and number of livestock, the period of use, and the amount of active use in animal unit months (AUMs), and terms and conditions for grazing use.

#### Comments

Please provide your comments by March 13, 2009 to Kathryn Dyer, Rangeland Management Specialist. You can provide your comments by the following means:

Mail:

Bureau of Land Management  
Surprise Field Office  
Attn: Kathryn Dyer  
PO Box 460  
Cedarville, CA 96104

E-mail: [kdyer@ca.blm.gov](mailto:kdyer@ca.blm.gov)



# Nevada Cowhead Pastures

